

# Breaking Down the

# BARRIERS

Alberta Transportation

February 2002



## Accessible Taxis in Red Deer

On Nov. 2, 2001, Associated Cabs in Red Deer introduced a fleet of three accessible taxis. The 2001 Ford Windstars were converted to meet the full CSA D409 standards and can accommodate one wheelchair, four passengers and the driver.

Scheduled bookings are taken for only two of the vans at any given time, leaving at least one van available for "on call" service 24 hours a day. To ensure that the accessible cabs are used to their maximum capacity, they can be dispatched to carry general fares; however, wheelchair users receive priority service.

The Red Deer Citizens Action Bus (CAB) and its customers are excited about the new accessible cabs. CAB is not a 24-hour service and booking a ride during peak hours can be a challenge. Associated Cabs' new accessible fleet is available as backup for CAB during the day and evening hours. The new taxis also provide access to transportation around the clock for people in wheelchairs – something new for Red Deer.

For more information, please contact:

**Paul Richard**  
**Owner/Operator**  
**Associated Cabs**  
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# **Profile – Member of the Advisory Committee on Barrier Free Transportation**



**Allan Enders**  
**President and CEO**  
**Checker Transportation Group**

## **How did you become interested in transportation issues?**

Having been involved in the industry since 1975, I have continually strived to improve the service the taxi industry delivers to the community. Our company became involved when the City of Calgary first introduced the Handi-Bus system, and specifically, a pilot program to improve mobility of seniors. This program was greatly utilized, cost-effective and continues to operate under Special Needs Taxi.

When the Federal Government proposed that the taxi industry introduce accessible taxis, we integrated seven vans into our fleet. This confirmed that the need for accessible taxis existed, but that customers had to have the trip subsidized because they could not afford to pay the meter rates. Unfortunately, this meant a financial loss for our company and the eventual shut down of accessible taxi service after four and a half years of operation.

## **What is your role on the Barrier Free Committee and why did you become involved?**

My role is to represent the taxi industry and promote feasible ways that taxis can be utilized to meet the needs of people with disabilities in a cost-effective way. Involvement in this Committee has already resulted in changes to the Calgary taxi bylaws regarding the D409 specification, making it less restrictive, but safe. I will continue to examine and promote ways in which the taxi industry can make a difference.



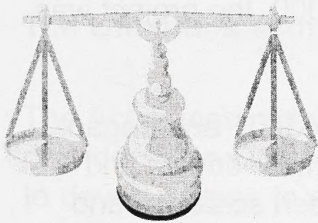
## What are the major concerns or issues you have related to accessible transportation?

I would like to see the taxi industry integrated into a viable accessible transportation system in every community. Innovative ways need to be put forward in order to meet the transportation needs of citizens with disabilities and to allow the taxi industry to participate in supplying service in a viable manner.



## Canadian Transportation Agency's Ruling on Obesity Case

Following September 2001 hearings held in Calgary, the Canadian Transportation Agency has concluded that obesity, itself, is not a disability for the purposes of the accessibility provisions contained in Part V of the **Canada Transportation Act**. However, the Agency does recognize that for some people it can be, if it presents an unfair obstacle to travel.

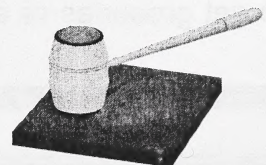


The decision means that persons who consider themselves disabled because of weight will have to file a complaint with the Agency and prove at a hearing that they have been denied adequate access to transportation. The Agency will then determine on a case-by-case basis whether conditions were unduly harsh.

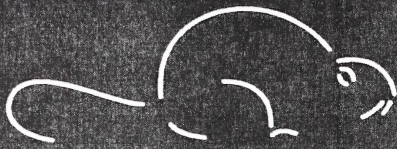
This case has implications for the current policy of the airline industry whereby persons with disabilities must pay an additional half fare when bringing along a bona fide attendant. This contrasts with the intercity bus, VIA Rail, and some ferry services that accommodate attendants at no charge.

For a copy of the Agency's decision, please visit the following website at:

**[www.cta-otc.gc.ca](http://www.cta-otc.gc.ca)**







# The Beaver County Call A Ride Society

One of the many issues facing Canadian society today is access by all citizens to necessary services. In rural and remote areas, this problem can become particularly acute. Beaver County, an hour east of Edmonton, is such a place where over 20 per cent of citizens are seniors.

In 1997, a group of concerned Beaver County citizens formed the Beaver County Volunteer Action Committee to address these issues. This group, composed of members of various health and social service agencies, was concerned over the lack of transportation options for residents with medical appointments. In 1999, through funding from the East Central Health Authority's "Action for Health" grant, the group completed a needs assessment study and ran a small pilot project in Holden, a small town in the centre of Beaver County.

The resulting data encouraged the group to apply for a grant from Health Canada's "Rural Health Innovations and Initiatives Fund" to operate a pilot project throughout the Beaver County area. In the fall of 2000, the project was approved for funding for 15 months.

The Beaver Call A Ride service was established in January 2001 and began operations in July. The service has two components: volunteer drivers and shuttle buses. There are nine volunteer drivers who have been screened and trained and arrange door to door rides with clients. Two handi-buses, along with trained drivers, are chartered from handi-bus operators as shuttle buses to run on a fixed schedule into Holden every two weeks, one from each end of the county.

The transportation system is subsidized with users either paying 50 per cent of the ride cost or whatever portion they can. The result is that usage of the system has been increasing steadily. The Beaver Call A Ride service is not restricted to medical purposes only. Users of the service include those needing to get groceries or attend support groups or counseling.



The service has provided a much needed stable form of transportation for those who have no other option. An impact evaluation is currently underway to assess how the service has affected local residents. The report is to be ready in April 2002.

There are some continuing challenges including the use of the shuttle buses, which has not been eagerly accepted. There is also a great deal of work to be done in the way of partnering with agencies that share transportation systems.

For more information, please contact:

**Mike Andresen**

**Coordinator**

**Beaver Call A Ride Society**

**E-mail: [callride@telusplanet.net](mailto:callride@telusplanet.net)**

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# **Ontarians with Disabilities Act**

The **Ontarians with Disabilities Act** became law on Dec. 13, 2001.

The Act places requirements on municipal governments, transportation providers, the Ontario Public Service and agencies in the broader public sector to develop plans to make their buildings, programs and services more accessible to persons with disabilities. The Act also contains a regulation-making authority to adopt codes and standards for the private sector.

A key, mandatory requirement of the legislation ensures that persons with disabilities are represented on Accessibility Advisory Committees and that they play a significant role in new organizations such as the Accessibility Advisory Council of Ontario.

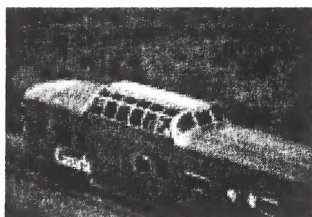
For a copy of the Act, please visit the following website at:

**[www.gov.on.ca](http://www.gov.on.ca)**



# **Rail's**

## **Purchase of Passenger Cars**



As reported in the June 2001 edition of *Breaking Down the Barriers*, Via Rail has purchased 139 British-built rail cars to increase passenger train service. The Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD) requested that the Canadian Transportation Agency intervene to stop VIA Rail from proceeding with the deal as it believed these cars were inaccessible for persons with disabilities.

In a Jan. 15, 2002 response to CCD filed with the Agency, Via Rail has confirmed that it will not be widening its doorways to allow for bigger wheelchairs. Those with wheelchairs wider than 71 centimetres will have to transfer to special onboard chairs.

CCD believes the restriction does not meet the Agency's Code of Practice on "Passenger Rail Car Accessibility and Terms and Conditions of Carriage by Rail of Persons with Disabilities" and will create significant barriers for many people with disabilities who want to travel.

Via Rail has argued the new cars would revitalize Canada's aging rolling stock and were bought for \$130 million, a fraction of what they would cost if built to order.

The trains were originally designed to use the Channel Tunnel between Britain and France. Technical problems, deregulation of the air industry, and tougher accessibility legislation meant the cars were never put into service.

For more information, please contact:

**David Baker**  
**Legal Counsel**  
**Council of Canadians with Disabilities**  
**Phone: (416) 533-0040**



# Did You Know?

**TRANSPORT  
CANADA**



As reported in the October 2001 edition of *Breaking Down the Barriers*, Transport Canada will be launching its web portal offering information on accessible transportation services in Spring 2002.

The web portal is modeled in part after the Alberta Inter-community Public Transportation Guide, which provides information on bus, air and rail services (including accessibility). The Alberta Guide can be found at:

[www.trans.gov.ab.ca](http://www.trans.gov.ab.ca)

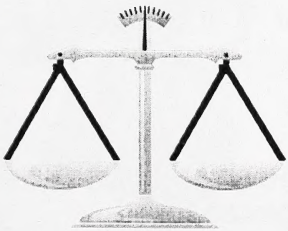
Watch for the Transport Canada's web portal on its website at:

[www.tc.gc.ca](http://www.tc.gc.ca)



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## ***Panel Hearing Set for Accessible Taxi Complaint***



Edmonton taxi operators, the City of Edmonton, Alberta Transportation, and Ms. Donna Martyn will be participating in an Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission preliminary panel hearing on March 22, 2002 to review legal and jurisdictional matters concerning a complaint made by Ms. Martyn.

Meanwhile, another complaint has been made by a Lethbridge resident, Mr. Ian McKenna, about the level of fares charged by the Lethbridge Handi-bus Society.

The Society, Lethbridge Transit and Alberta Transportation have been named in the complaint, which is being investigated by the Commission.

# Did You Know?

The Victoria Transport Policy Institute has developed a "Transportation Demand Management Encyclopedia" available at the following website address:  
[www.vtpi.org](http://www.vtpi.org)

This reference document includes a chapter entitled, "Defining, Evaluating and Improving Accessibility" which may be of some interest to readers.

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